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Roselli, John
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Mafioso Confirms CIA Plot on Castro

By George Lardner Jr.
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Underworld figure Johnny Roselli confirmed in Senate testimony yesterday that he worked with the Central Intelligence Agency in the early 1960s in an effort to assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

Escorted by Capitol police who were assigned to help him duck photographers, Roselli appeared before the Senate intelligence committee in closed session for some three hours. Sources said he emphasized that he regards his work for the CIA as an assignment motivated solely by patriotism.

Chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho) declined to discuss Roselli's testimony in any detail, but said it "did not depart" from what has already been published about Roselli's assignment.

Chicago Mafia boss Sam Giancana, who was murdered at his home in Oak Park, Ill., last week, also figured in the testimony, but, Church indicated, not as a major actor.

Giancana's West Coast lieutenant, Roselli was enlisted for the CIA in the waning days of the Eisenhower administration by Robert A. Maheu, a former FBI agent and then a consultant for billionaire Howard Hughes.

Several years ago, in seeking reduction of a prison sentence for a \$1 million gin rummy cheating scheme in Los Angeles, Roselli said through an attorney that he not only worked with Maheu on a CIA-sponsored campaign to kill Castro, but even had a powerboat shot out from under him on one dash to the Cuban coast.

Roselli was reportedly involved in six unsuccessful attempts on Castro's life, including at least one scheme to poison the Cuban leader's food. The last attempt was said to have been made in early 1963.

Church said Roselli supplied the committee with "much greater detail and much greater understanding" than it

previously had, but without identifying many of the individuals he worked with.

The committee accepted that, Church said, because Roselli "was worried that to name people other than those in the government might endanger their lives." Sources close to the committee said later that the fear was exaggerated, but that Roselli was not pressed for names because the committee had already obtained them from other sources.

Roselli, who is now 69, worked for the CIA out of Miami under the supervision of two CIA officers, James O'Connell and William Harvey. O'Connell has already testified before the committee. Harvey, now retired and living in Indianapolis is scheduled to testify today.

Maheu invoked the Fifth Amendment when called be-

fore the committee earlier this month, but is expected to testify soon under a grant of immunity from prosecution.

By contrast, Roselli, whose real name is Filippo Sacco, has been fighting a deportation order partly on the strength of his anti-Castro activities. Born in Esperia, Italy, he protested last year before U.S. Immigration Judge Joseph W. Monsanto of Miami that deportation to Italy would subject him to "persecution by leftists and Communists" there because of publicity about his cloak-and-dagger work involving Cuba.

Monsanto rejected the argument in January, holding that Roselli's "actions against Castro, that is, the alleged attempts to assassinate him, can have no effect upon his future residence in Italy." The case, which stems from Roselli's 1968 conviction for failing to register as an alien, is now before the U.S. Board of Immigration Appeals.

Speaking with reporters after yesterday's Senate hearing, Church said the committee had not made any bargain with Roselli in return for his testimony. Asked about the deportation case, Church said, "The committee is not entering into that aspect of Mr. Roselli's life at all."

Roselli apparently did not deal with any government officials outside the CIA, Church said. The committee is attempting to find out what high-level authorizations the CIA may have gotten for various assassination plots and attempts during the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

Asked by a foreign newsman how such schemes could have escaped the notice of the CIA's "watchdog" committees in Congress, Church said: "The fact is that the watchdog committees of the Congress were not watching the dog."

CIA/04 O'Connell,
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